

A number of programs with empirical evidence of effectiveness in addressing problems of aggression and disruption have emerged in schools.

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Alternative strategies for school violence prevention

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TRAGIC SCHOOL SHOOTINGS of children by children have caused parents, teachers, principals, and community members throughout the nation to question their basic assumptions about school safety. Schools should be nurturing environments promoting children's intellectual and social development, but disruptions that interfere with learning can create a climate of fear in which children avoid school or engage in self-protective behavior. Although shootings with multiple victims represent an extreme example of school violence, these rare incidents have shaped much of the discussion about how to prevent violence and create safe schools.¹

Many segments of the public believe that school violence is increasing. The most current data on school violence and youth victimization in the United States indicate, however, that schools are the safest places for children and that serious acts of violence have decreased since 1993.² Fewer homicides and violent crimes are committed against children at school than in their homes or on the streets. In fact, students are more than forty times more likely to be the victim of a homicide away from school than at school. Most injuries that children experience at school are not violence

related, and the majority of school crime is theft, not assault. Finally, data reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as part of the Uniform Crime Reports, as well as students' self-report of victimization in the National Crime Victimization Surveys, indicate that violence perpetrated by and against youth continues to decline.

Assessing the effects of violence-prevention efforts

Measuring the efficacy of violence-prevention efforts is difficult. The conceptualization and definition of school violence shape how schools respond to the problem and measure prevention efforts.³ Depending on the definition of the term, acts of school violence can range from threats of physical violence, to bullying, physical assaults, and homicide.

Assessing the impact of violence-prevention efforts requires data on the current level of school violence. Many of the data are based on student and teacher perceptions of school safety, official police reports, and telephone interviews of adolescents.⁴ Data-gathering methods to assess school violence vary considerably, and perceived violence is consistently reported at higher levels than self-reports of violent incidents.⁵ This is due, in part, to media reports of school violence. For example, following the highly publicized shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, public perceptions of the safety of schools deteriorated markedly.⁶ Reports of school safety are also highly dependent on the group interested in studying the problem. School administrators and school boards may not be interested in tallying and publicizing all acts of school crime and disorder. Historically, school administrators have underreported and handled serious acts of misconduct at school informally. In contrast, parents and community groups may find this same information vital to their support of schools and school leadership. In recent years, mandatory reporting requirements associated with the Drug Free and Safe Schools Act have required greater disclosure by the schools.

Violence prevention in context

Dramatic changes in public schools during the past decade have affected the ways in which schools respond to violence and disruption. Among these changes are an increased focus on accountability, information technology, and achievement in the public schools. Accountability and an emphasis on literacy for the information age have created a greater sense of urgency among educators. Teachers, principals, and superintendents are being asked to measure and demonstrate tangible academic gains in student performance.

As academic expectations have increased, there has been a decrease in school tolerance for deviant behavior. In this high-stakes climate, disruptive students, particularly those who score poorly on tests that measure the performance of the classroom, school, or school district, are at risk for being excluded from the education community. Zero-tolerance policies nominally have been created to provide better opportunities for other students to achieve academic milestones by removing so-called troublemakers from the school. By removing low-achieving disruptive students from the schools, these policies may increase the likelihood that average levels of student achievement will rise in order to meet state or district standards.

Effective practice

Zero-tolerance school policies have led to a more punitive approach to student behavior,⁷ focusing on a limited number of reactive and punitive responses to problem behavior, including office discipline referrals, in- and out-of-school suspension, and expulsion. Although these approaches may be perceived as providing immediate and short-term relief to teachers and administrators, they fail to address the school structures and processes necessary for effective prevention of serious misconduct (see Chapters One and Two, this issue).

Fortunately, researchers and practitioners have identified and assessed the efficacy of more positive and proactive approaches to violence prevention. These interventions can be placed in three categories: schoolwide or universal interventions, student-centered approaches, and school security measures. In the following sections, we examine empirically validated and promising programs, schoolwide and student-centered interventions, and school security measures.

Universal interventions

Schoolwide or universal interventions attempt to create school and classroom climates for all children that promote social and academic growth and a sense of community. These interventions endeavor to create a culture within the school in which respect for the individual, predictability, and the perception of fair play shape the behavior of teachers, students, and administrators.

Effective universal or schoolwide behavioral support relies on development and implementation of a systematic approach to training, monitoring, and reinforcement of appropriate behavior.⁸ These interventions may exist as a component of a comprehensive schoolwide plan that addresses universal and individualized interventions or as a more general program that attends solely to schoolwide interventions. For example, the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) focuses solely on a schoolwide educational program that teaches and reinforces appropriate social skills for all students (although the RCCP is currently developing a component of the program that targets high-risk students). The other two schoolwide interventions programs, Project ACHIEVE and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), also include plans for targeting small groups of at-risk students and individual interventions for youth who do not respond to more general interventions.

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program

This K-12 school-based intervention supports youth in the development of social and emotional skills necessary to decrease violence and prejudice, form relationships, and develop healthy lives.⁹ RCCP is an example of a social-cognitive intervention in which students are taught conflict resolution through modeling, role playing, interviewing, and small group work. The fifty-one weekly lessons are used to teach skills such as communication, listening, self-expression, dealing with anger, conflict resolution, cooperation, recognizing the value of diversity, and countering bias.

Training is an essential component of the RCCP program. Teachers receive training and ongoing support to facilitate their integration of concepts and skills into the existing curriculum. In addition, school administrators, support staff, and parents receive training in conflict resolution techniques consistent with those imparted to teachers. A select group of students receive peer mediation training.

A comprehensive review of research revealed that the social-cognitive approach used within RCCP was effective for all age groups of students in reducing crime, antisocial behavior, and conduct problems.¹⁰ Specifically related to RCCP, results were promising when the teachers received a moderate amount of training and assistance, covered half of the lessons or more, and had a low number of peer mediators in their class.¹¹ Students in these classes were significantly less hostile. Furthermore, student prosocial behavior increased, as compared to students in classrooms where teachers taught fewer RCCP lessons and relied on relatively more peer mediators. Although the empirical support for peer mediation as an effective strategy in isolation is inconsistent, it may be more effective when included as part of a multicomponent intervention such as RCCP. In addition, because there were fewer positive effects for boys, younger children, and children in high-risk classrooms and neighborhoods, supplementing RCCP with other effective interventions is advisable.

Project ACHIEVE

Project ACHIEVE, a universal intervention for elementary and middle schools, provides training to school personnel in six areas: problem solving, social skills and behavior management, effective teaching and instruction, curriculum-based assessment and academic interventions, parent education and training, and organizational planning, development, and evaluation. Preliminary evaluations of Project ACHIEVE are promising. Positive effects include a 28 percent decrease in discipline referrals and a 6 percent decrease in out-of-school suspensions. In addition, after three years, the suspension rate decreased from 11 percent to 3 percent.¹²

Implementing Project ACHIEVE requires an initial analysis of school strengths and needs and a schoolwide functional behavioral assessment. This assessment includes an analysis of current discipline procedures; student, teacher, and environmental characteristics and issues; and available resources. The information obtained from the assessment provides the basis for intervention planning. In addition, the Project ACHIEVE model includes processes for developing general hypotheses, collecting data, developing and implementing the intervention, and evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention based on the data.¹³

Project ACHIEVE has strong parent and teacher training components. The goal of both is for students to be consistently exposed to and use identified social skills and procedures for dealing with conflict across a variety of settings. The parent training program provides instruction in effective tutoring, positive behavior management, and information on their child's curriculum. Parents are provided opportunities to use this information within organized classroom tutoring of their own and other children. Consultants also assist parents in implementing these approaches at home.

Project ACHIEVE components target high-risk students and others who require individualized interventions. Specifically, teachers are trained to use data from curriculum-based measures to identify students who are at risk for failure or are achieving below expectations. Based on the contexts in which these students ex-

perience academic or behavioral difficulties, teachers implement specific instructional adaptations and behavioral supports. Such adaptations or interventions can be implemented with individuals or small groups of students who are experiencing difficulties. For example, if a student or group of students has difficulty with homework, the teacher assesses the context of the student behavior to identify if direct instruction of a specific skill would be appropriate or if students possess the needed skills and implementation of a behavioral intervention is appropriate. Consultants provide support to teachers with record keeping and data analysis to help assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

PBIS, another universal prevention program, is designed for all students and includes setting (such as playground and lunchroom) and classroom-specific support for students who have chronic behavior problems.¹⁴ Results of the PBIS model are promising, with a reduction in office referrals ranging from 30 percent to 68 percent. Furthermore, these results have been maintained over several years with continued implementation. To maintain positive results, ongoing staff commitment and access to technical assistance and consultation from an outside source (a university) are important, as well as regular leadership team meetings to review data on office discipline referrals, identify behavioral patterns, and make data-driven decisions related to program modification.¹⁵

As with Project ACHIEVE, an initial step in this process is to identify issues unique to the school through a functional behavioral assessment. With the agreement and support of the principal and at least 80 percent of the staff, a building-based team is formed. This team is responsible for the "development, implementation, modification, and evaluation of prevention efforts"¹⁶ and bases its decisions on six central components of the PBIS model:

- (a) an agreed upon and common approach to discipline; (b) a positively stated statement of purpose; (c) a small number of positively stated

expectations for all students and staff; (d) procedures for teaching these expectations to all students; (e) a continuum of procedures for encouraging displays and maintenance of these expectations; (f) a continuum of procedures for displays of rule-violating behavior; and (g) procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the discipline system on a regular and frequent basis.¹⁷

Effective universal interventions

Promising results exist for comprehensive prevention programs that focus on universal interventions and also address the needs of individual students with more serious behavior. RCCP, Project ACHIEVE, and PBIS are based in part on the belief that school discipline consists of more than establishing and enforcing rules by reacting to inappropriate student behavior.¹⁸ Five critical components exist within the effective universal interventions discussed: (1) schoolwide functional behavioral assessment or needs assessment and intervention planning; (2) teacher, administrator, and parent support and education; (3) clear rules, consequences, and conflict resolution and skills training for students; (4) effective instruction; and (5) ongoing monitoring of student behavior and outcomes.

As an initial step in developing a violence-prevention program, RCCP, Project ACHIEVE, and PBIS include a form of schoolwide needs assessment and intervention planning. Understanding the context in which behaviors occur provides the foundation for planning and implementing an appropriate program. In addition, Project ACHIEVE and PBIS rely on a team-based approach to problem identification and implementation of interventions. The Project ACHIEVE model uses four teams: (1) a multidisciplinary school staff team to complete the initial needs assessment; (2) a master teacher and classroom teacher team, whereby the master teacher provides an instructional model and slowly fades his or her role in the classroom; (3) grade-level teams; and (4) a schoolwide discipline committee comprising the grade-level team leaders. Within the PBIS model, the leadership team consists of teachers, the principal, a parent, and another member of the school staff.

The team is expected to "conduct instructional or environmental analysis, collect and analyze data, develop academic or social skills lessons, and develop and make accommodations to specialized academic or behavioral support plans."¹⁹

These universal programs consistently address the issues of teacher, administrator, and parent support and education. For example, Project ACHIEVE and PBIS identify teacher participation in the prevention interventions as critical. Although the RCCP program does not set a specific rate of teacher acceptance prior to implementation, the authors acknowledge the importance of teacher investment in the program. Once commitment to program implementation is acquired, continued support and education are provided. Within the PBIS and RCCP models, outside consultants provide training and ongoing support. Existing staff provide the training and consultation within Project ACHIEVE. Also, all three programs advocate parent participation. Of particular note is Project ACHIEVE, which includes both involvement and training of parents and school support staff (for example, paraprofessionals, custodians, and bus drivers).

Training and support of educators is accompanied by a school-wide focus on clear rules and consequences, and conflict resolution and skills training for students. This focus is significant, given that youth violence has been linked to a lack of social and problem-solving skills.²⁰ Experts agree that skills training is an effective alternative to suspension and sends an appropriate message to students that they are wanted in school. In addition to teaching skills for negotiating nonviolent outcomes to conflict, youth are instructed in interpreting social cues and taking the perspective of others. Project ACHIEVE and PBIS also emphasize the importance of effective instruction as part of universal interventions. Within Project ACHIEVE, teachers are trained and supervised in curriculum analysis, use of curriculum-based measures, and implementation of empirically validated instructional practices. Although no specific component within PBIS addresses effective instruction, the program has been integrated into a schoolwide literacy model. In

addition, interventions such as direct instruction, use of manipulatives, peer collaboration, and other empirically validated instructional practices have been included within the PBIS model.²¹

Another important component that Project ACHIEVE, PBIS, and RCCP share is the ongoing monitoring of student behavior and outcomes. Among the indicators used to identify student progress are incidence of office discipline referrals, suspension rates, student achievement, and special education referral and placement. The use of empirical evidence accurately identifies students who require individual as well as universal interventions.

Targeted approaches

This second group of interventions seeks to change the behavior and school experiences for specific students. Targeted interventions may provide special programs, classes, or schools for those who have engaged in specific acts of misconduct or those most at risk for engaging in antisocial and disruptive behavior. Interventions aimed at individual students or groups of students can also teach specific skills such as conflict resolution strategies or social skills.

Student-centered approaches focus on the 5 to 10 percent of the student population who are at risk for disciplinary problems. These students require additional support beyond universal, schoolwide plans.²² Schools must detect students at risk and identify those with chronic behavior problems in order to provide appropriate and effective interventions. Here we look at two central topics: the early identification and detection of students and examples of two effective student-centered approaches: Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT) and First Step to Success.

Early identification and early detection

Implementing individual student intervention begins by identifying students who do not respond to universal interventions. Estimates are that approximately 40 percent of student discipline referrals are given to 5 percent of the student population.²³ Con-

sequently, reviewing office referrals may be a method for identifying students who require additional interventions. At-risk students might also be identified through analysis of attendance data, juvenile justice involvement, and direct observation. This process of establishing which students are not benefiting from universal intervention is referred to as early identification.

In contrast, early detection can be used prior to student misconduct and focuses on students who are at a high risk for violent and antisocial behavior. One effective tool for early detection is the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders.²⁴ This instrument, which provides a multiple-step procedure for detecting students at risk, includes an initial teacher referral process based on a review of the behavior of every student in the classroom. Students are then ranked based on adaptive and maladaptive behavior and observation. Early detection is distinct from early identification in that detection requires a systematic screening to recognize the students who are at high risk. In contrast, early identification is an individual prevention process that considers which students have already experienced difficulties. Both approaches provide an effective system of assessing students and deciding who may benefit from an intervention beyond the schoolwide plan.

Early detection and identification are not simply steps toward the identification of students in need of special education.²⁵ Rather, they are processes through which students can receive the supports they need to maintain positive social interactions.

Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT)

The PACT program, a cognitive-behavioral intervention designed to be sensitive to the cultural needs of adolescent African American students who are at risk for violence, has helped to reduce physical aggression and adjudication for participating students.²⁶ The focus is on modeling appropriate behavior and instruction in problem-solving strategies and includes role playing and videotaped vignettes that portray African Americans modeling specific skills. PACT is designed to provide participants with skills to resist violence and negotiate conflicts, such as giving and receiving positive

and negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, and problem solving. Students are taught methods for expressing difficult feelings (anger, frustration, disappointment, and others) and appropriate means of resolving conflicts. A third component of PACT, anger management, deals with recognition of anger, self-control, and consideration of consequences to actions, and is designed to help students understand the consequences of serious misconduct.

First Step to Success

The First Step to Success program is a student-centered approach designed for students in kindergarten who exhibit aggressive or defiant behavior. The program has shown significant positive effects for aggression, academic engagement time, adaptive, and maladaptive behavior that have been maintained over time.²⁷ The program uses skills training and a reward system to teach and reinforce positive student behavior. Following an initial identification process, consultants work with teachers, parents, and students to coordinate a program across school and home settings. The school program consists of a system of awarding students points at regular intervals for appropriate behavior. The home component includes a child skills program with lessons on five topics: self-expression, developing self-confidence, cooperation, solving problems, and interacting with others. Students are reinforced for positive school behavior at both school and home.

Effective targeted interventions

Targeted interventions for violence prevention are those designed for small groups of at-risk students or students who have been identified as not benefiting from universal interventions. The PACT and First Step to Success programs provide a snapshot of effective interventions for small groups of students. Several commonalities exist between these two examples and the research on effective interventions for students requiring support beyond universal interventions. For example, both include components of cognitive-behavioral and social-cognitive strategies, approaches that have consistently resulted in positive student outcomes. Specifically, both

programs include instructing students on methods for solving problems, self-expression, and interacting positively with others.

Intensive interventions

Universal interventions and programs, such as PACT and First Step to Success, target small groups of students and may have a positive impact on a majority of students. However, individual behavioral interventions are necessary for 3 to 5 percent of the student population for whom inappropriate behavior has become a persistent problem. Two approaches that show some promise in meeting the needs of these students are the use of functional behavioral assessment and alternative educational programs.

Functional behavioral assessment

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a process through which a problem behavior is identified and clearly described. Direct observation and interviewing establish the contexts in which a behavior occurs and the consequences that maintain the behavior.²⁸ Based on this information, individualized interventions can be implemented. For students receiving special education services, the use of FBA is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act when school personnel take actions that remove students for more than ten days from their educational placement. Although this is an effective use of FBA, to limit its implementation to purposes of reaction reduces its possible benefits in the prevention of student violence.

FBA has great potential as a proactive strategy. For example, it is effective for nondisabled students and can be effectively blended with common classroom interventions.²⁹ The PBIS model integrates the use of FBA into the development of programs at the universal and individual student levels. Extended training for all teachers and a team-based approach to implementation may be necessary for widespread and effective use of FBA. A review of current research revealed that a validated FBA methodology does not

currently exist; however, procedural similarities do exist across forms of FBA. Further research is needed to delineate specific procedures for effective use of this approach.

Alternative schools

A primary guide to the effectiveness of alternative programs is their ability to provide student participation in the general education curriculum and, when appropriate, with support services and modifications.³⁰ However, the tremendous variability in student composition, structure, and purpose makes it difficult to develop any generalized statement on the effectiveness of these programs. For example, alternative placements include schools within schools, punitive alternative placements that substitute for suspension or expulsion, continuation schools that students attend voluntarily after leaving the public schools, schools within the juvenile justice system, and charter schools. In spite of this variability, alternative programs do appear to have a small but positive effect on student academic performance, attitude, and self-esteem.³¹ Furthermore, alternative schools that serve a specific target population tend to have a more significant effect on these variables. Two major concerns with the alternative schools research exist, however: problems with the quality of the studies (lack of a control group, random sampling, and follow-up when students return to regular public schools) and lack of positive effects noted on the delinquent behavior of participants.

Because alternative schools are an option that many schools employ, an examination of alternative settings and identification of the common components associated with program success is justified. Clearly, elements of effective intervention at either the universal and individual student level are relevant to effective violence prevention in alternative settings. In addition, a number of crucial components to effective alternative placements have been identified:

- (a) procedures for conducting functional assessments of the skills and learning needs of the students; (b) a flexible curriculum that teaches func-

tional academics, social and daily living skills; (c) effective and efficient instructional techniques; (d) transitional programs and procedures that tie the alternative school to the public school and to the community; (e) comprehensive systems for providing both internal alternative school services and external community services to students; and (f) availability of appropriate staff and resources for students with disabilities.³²

Identification of critical characteristics for effective alternative programs is a positive starting point. Additional research is necessary, however, to develop specific strategies and maximize the benefit of alternative settings for students related to academic achievement, serious misconduct, and attitude toward school.

Effective intensive interventions

Intensive interventions provide another level of support for students who do not benefit from universal interventions or those that target small groups of students. Although there is less empirical validation of alternative schools and functional behavior assessment, individualization for students with severe and chronic behavior problems and the analysis of the contexts in which behaviors are exhibited seems a promising approach.

School security measures

Implementing school security measures is another popular strategy in the effort to prevent violence. This group of interventions is designed to detect and deter potential perpetrators of school violence before they harm themselves or others. The use of metal detectors, school security officers or school resource officers, and surveillance cameras are all examples of school security measures that have been introduced to prevent school violence. In contrast to universal interventions and efforts focused on specific individuals, these measures introduce into school settings techniques that are frequently associated with the anonymous control of individuals in airports and prisons.

In 1999, the Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice issued a report, *The Appropriate Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools*.³³ While acknowledging that school security measures are not the answer to all problems associated with violence in the schools, the document makes an explicit assumption that security technology, such as surveillance cameras and metal detectors, is an important component of a school security plan.

Unfortunately, although many school districts have purchased hardware to detect weapons that could be brought into school buildings, there is little evidence that these measures create safer education environments. A statewide study in California reported that most school districts used violence-prevention curricula and had strong police and security. In addition, schools reported using surveillance cameras, canine searches, and metal detectors. But the majority of school districts had no evidence supporting the effectiveness of these efforts.³⁴ An ethnographic study of efforts to suppress gang activity in three urban high schools examined the effectiveness of metal detectors, surveillance cameras, perimeter fencing, and school security officers. The evidence suggested that these measures were ineffective in suppressing gang activity and student violence in the schools.³⁵

An analysis of responses from over nine thousand youth from the 1995 National Crime Victimization Survey examined students' perception of school violence and disorder in schools with secure buildings (that is, places that emphasized security measures like metal detectors, locked doors, and personal searches), and schools with a system of law (that is, schools where the rules were emphasized and the consequences of breaking the rules were known). Findings suggest that when students know the rules and consequences for misbehavior and are aware that the rules in a school are applied fairly under the system of law, less victimization and disorder is present in the school. Where disorder exists, students reported engaging in more acts of self-protection. In contrast, the more efforts taken to run a secure building through physical means (metal detectors) and personnel interventions (school resource officers, staff watching hallways), the more victimization

and disorder (fights, thefts) were reported present, and the less safe students reported feeling.³⁶

Identifying successful approaches

Table 4.1 provides examples of the three approaches to violence prevention and compares the results of research in each of the areas. This analysis of alternative strategies for school violence prevention identified several features of successful approaches. Schools that effectively prevent serious misconduct have “policies (e.g., proactive discipline handbooks, procedural handbooks), structures (e.g., behavioral support teams), and routines (e.g., opportunities for students to learn expected behavior, staff development, data-based decision making) that promote the identification, adoption, implementation, and monitoring of research-validated practices [emphasis added].”³⁷ Finally, the link between academic achievement and student behavior is clearly documented in the research.³⁸ Together, these results indicate that the goal of violence-prevention programs should be broadly conceived to include controlling student behavior and supporting student academic success.

Several research-based recommendations for effective violence prevention in schools flow from our review of literature:

Policies

- Clear rules and consequences: Clearly stated rules and consequences for students, teachers, and administrators are important components of effective universal interventions. The positive effects on student behavior when teachers establish, teach, and reinforce rules have been well documented.

Structures

- Principal support: Administrative support is critical for successful prevention programs. Evidence suggests that support should be visible, predictable, and continuous.

Table 4.1. Responses to school violence and disruption

<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Type of Response</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Staff Training</i>	<i>Empirical Support</i>	<i>Staff Time Required</i>	<i>School Climate and Culture</i>
Universal, schoolwide interventions	Proactive, preventive	RCCP, Project ACHIEVE, PBIS	Yes, initial training, on-going support	Yes	All staff: Initial investment of time, on-going involvement	Positive changes
Student-centered approaches	Reactive, preventive	Project ACHIEVE, PBIS, PACT, First Step to Success	Yes, on-going	Yes	Small group of staff: Initial investment of time, on-going involvement	No changes
School security measure	Reactive, preventive	Surveillance cameras, metal detectors, security officers	No	No	Outside staff: On-going involvement	Potential negative changes

- Ongoing support to staff: Continuing access to qualified consultants can assist educators in their attempts to implement procedures with a high level of fidelity.
- Parent and community involvement across settings: Positive results are obtained through extending school-based prevention programs to a number of domains of student life. Parents, and other community members whenever possible or appropriate, are important in supporting prevention programs.

Routines

- Needs assessment and functional behavioral assessment: The needs and available resources of the school must be evaluated. Furthermore, an assessment of the needs and values within the community, school, teachers, and student contexts can be used to develop procedures and interventions that are socially and culturally appropriate.
- Staff acceptance: Staff willingness to support and implement a program is critical to its success. Students show significantly more improvement with teachers who implement a prevention program consistently.
- Staff training: Critical components of a prevention plan can be appropriately implemented and maintained through comprehensive staff development.
- Conflict resolution and social skills training for students: Programs focusing on conflict resolution and social skills training frequently use direct instruction, teacher and peer modeling, role playing, and rehearsal to teach students. Programs focusing on these aspects have consistently resulted in reduced inappropriate behavior, increased student attendance, and short-term gains in problem solving, particularly for younger and disadvantaged children. Results of a recent meta-analysis indicate that social skills training in isolation may have limited effects on students with emotional and behavioral disorders.³⁹ However, combining schoolwide social skills training and targeted group behavioral interventions has been successful in reducing inappropriate student behavior in the lunchroom, on the playground, and during hallway transitions.

- Program monitoring and effective implementation: Consistent and high-quality program implementation is essential. The quality of program implementation may be more important than whether a program was implemented. Quality prevention programs are increasingly using student outcome data (office discipline referrals, suspension rates, student achievement and special education referral and placement) to monitor program effectiveness.

Conclusion

Approaches to violence prevention based on zero tolerance of proscribed behaviors and removal of students from school settings are at best short-term solutions. Youth suspended or expelled from school because of threats or acts of violence may need to be removed from school for short periods of time. Yet long-term suspensions and expulsions merely transfer school problems to the community. Without assistance and support, youth who need behavioral interventions and quality education programs become prime candidates for the agency of last resort: the juvenile justice system. Evidence suggests that the effective strategies to reduce school violence involve schoolwide strategies such as RCCP, Project ACHIEVE, and PBIS. There is also evidence that individually targeted interventions such as conflict resolution and social skills instruction, systematic classroom management, parent involvement, early warning and screening, and implementing individual behavior plans are promising strategies for reducing school violence.

Schools should consider several principles when planning violence-prevention initiatives. First, schoolwide violence-prevention initiatives based on a public health model are effective. Schoolwide interventions by design systematically address the needs of all students, including those with significant academic, emotional, or behavioral problems. These approaches typically include more intensive interventions for students with severe academic and social

needs. Second, although the use of security technology may be politically popular and may convince the public that administrators are addressing threats to the safety of the school, there is no evidence supporting the effectiveness of these approaches in preventing school violence and some evidence that the use of security technology may actually exacerbate school disorder. Third, effective schoolwide prevention initiatives are comprehensive and multicomponent and provide a broad range of services and supports over a sufficient period of time. Because the antecedents of youth violence are highly correlated, prevention programs that address a range of interrelated risk and protective factors have greater potential than single-focus programs.

Notes

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